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LAOU-SENG-URH,

OR,

“AN HEIR IN HIS OLD AGE.”

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A CHINESE DRAMA.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

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London: printed by W. Bulmer and Co.
Cleveland-row, St. James's.

ADVERTISEMENT,

BY THE EDITOR.

THE Comedy of "An Heir in his Old Age," is taken from the same collection as that of the Orphan of Chao." It is the translation of Mr. Davis, a Writer on the establishment of the East India Company's factory at Canton, and a son of the Director of that name; a young man who greatly distinguished himself at the College of Hertford, and one from whom much curious and valuable information may be expected, on the state of literature of China. The

translation was sent from Canton to the Court of Directors, as a literary curiosity, and placed in their library at the India House ; which, it is almost needless to say, is as free and accessible to those who may be disposed to make use of it, as any public library in the kingdom ; and the Editor feels it due to the Court of Directors to add, that immediately on their being made acquainted with his opinion, that the play ought to be published, the original copy was sent to him, with their permission to print it.

Mr. Davis is gone up with Lord Amherst to Peking, as are also Sir George Staunton, Mr. Manning, and Mr. Morrison ; all well versed in the

written and spoken languages of China. With such assistance, how infinitely greater are the advantages of the present Embassy, in all its bearings, than that of the Earl of Macartney, whose intercourse and communications were committed to the timidity and ignorance of two Chinese missionaries, who had been educated in the College *De Propaganda Fide*—yet this Embassy laid the foundation of that knowledge of the singular language of China, which is now so rapidly spreading itself over various parts of the globe.

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A

BRIEF VIEW

OF

THE CHINESE DRAMA,

AND OF THEIR

THEATRICAL EXHIBITIONS.

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AND OF THEIR
THE CHINESE DRAMA,
OF
BRIEF VIEW

BRIEF VIEW, &c.

AMONG the many interesting and valuable communications, for which Europe is indebted to the Jesuits and the other less enlightened and more prejudiced orders of the Catholic missionaries, who established themselves in China more than two centuries ago, very little is to be found respecting the taste of that extraordinary nation for lyric poetry, or theatrical exhibitions; and from the infrequency of European visitors, we are left almost wholly in the dark with regard to the nature of this kind of composition, as well as of the actual state of the drama,

and indeed of that department of literature in general which is usually known by the name of *belles lettres*. Led astray by Chinese prejudices, and falling in with Chinese feelings, respecting their ancient books, these writers have so stuffed their communications with excessive panegyric on the beauties of the four *King*, and the wisdom and virtues of *Yao* and *Chun*, as to leave themselves no time to enquire into the modern state of general literature. We are told, indeed, by Pere Cibot,* and the remark is copied from him by the Abbé Grozier, “that they would speak, in China, of a man of letters making good verses, just as they would speak, in France, of a captain of infantry playing well on the violin;” yet both the one and the other immediately contradict such a notion, by quoting several pieces of poetry, both ancient and modern, extolling their beauties, and endeavouring to

* Mem. Chin. Tom. viii. p. 237.

shew their influence over the passions, and the estimation in which they have been held from the earliest periods to the present times. The truth is, the most ancient records that remain of China, consist of poetry. The very symbol by which compositions of this kind are designated, points out their early origin ;—*shee*, a character compounded of a *word*, and a *hall* or *temple*, a place from which the magistrates anciently delivered instruction to the people—the *words of the temple*—being short-measured sentences, composed generally of four characters, so chosen as to be each of them very expressive and significant, and easily committed to the memory. The Book of Odes, one of the four most eminent and ancient of their classics, is chiefly composed of this kind of verse.

It is not necessary, however, to dive into the depths of antiquity, or to have recourse

to ancient compositions, in order to prove a very general predilection of the Chinese for epic and lyric poetry. The late *Kien-lung* amused himself with writing an epic poem, called *Moukden*, and two or three others of considerable length, besides several lyrical odes, songs, and epigrams, as half the tea-cups in the empire can testify ; his unfortunate favourite, whose wealth and influence drew upon him the vengeance of the reigning emperor, wrote verses in his prison the day before his execution ; and the Editor has in his possession the translation of a copy of verses, entitled “ *London ;*” written by a Chinese, who had accompanied a Gentleman to England, in the capacity of his servant, describing very concisely, but characteristically, what he saw, and more particularly, those things which contrasted with the manners and appearances of his own country.

It is not correct, therefore, to say that the

Chinese have no relish for poetry. They cannot avoid liking it, for every symbol of their written language is poetical; each character presenting to the eye, and through it to the mind, the picture of the idea which it is meant to represent. It is true, some of the missionaries make a reserve in favour of *ancient* poetry: "the good old times" are praised in more countries than in China, and with as little knowledge of what their "goodness" consisted in; but Mr. Morrison, in his Chinese Grammar, quotes a Chinese author who seems to have sounder notions on the subject than either Pere Cibot or the Abbé Grozier: he compares the progress of poetry among his countrymen to the gradual growth of a tree: "the ancient *She-king* (the Book of Odes) may be likened to the roots; when *Spo-loo* flourished, the buds appeared; in the time of *Keen-ngan* there was abundance of leaves; but during the

dynasty *Tang*, many reposed under the shade of the tree, and it yielded rich supplies of flowers and fruit." *

In like manner the two writers above mentioned, Cibot first, and Grozier servilely copying him, pretend to say, that from the earliest periods in which theatrical exhibitions entered into domestic amusements, and the public entertainments of the court, the learned have not ceased to publish philosophical observations on the dangers of the theatre, and its baneful effects on public manners. "Plays (says one of these philosophers) are a kind of artificial fire-works of wit, which appear in the night of disorder; they debase and expose those who let them off, fatigue the delicate eyes of the sage, occupy dangerously idle minds, expose women and children who listen to them, give out more of smoke and stench than of light,

* Grammar of the Chinese Language, p. 273.

leaving only a dangerous dazzling, and often cause dreadful conflagrations." * Yet in the same page we are told that the greater part of Chinese comedies and tragedies appear to be written to shew the deformity of vice and the charms of virtue. The writer might have added, that they are universally performed and encouraged from the court to the cottage; that the Chinese are so passionately fond of scenic representations, that in most houses of the great, a hall is set apart for the performance of plays; that no entertainment is ever given without a company of comedians to amuse the guests; that they constitute a part of all public festivals; and that foreign ambassadors are invariably entertained with theatrical representations:—he might further have added, that it is not true, as he asserts, that public theatres are put on a level with houses of

* Mem. Chin. Tom. viii. p. 227.

prostitution and confined to the suburbs of cities.* There is no such thing, in fact, as a public theatre in all China. A Chinese company of players will at any time construct a theatre in the course of a couple of hours; a few bamboos as posts to support a roof of mats, and a floor of boards, raised some six or seven feet from the ground; and a few pieces of painted cotton to cover the three sides, the front being left entirely open, are all that is required for the construction of a Chinese theatre; which very much resembles, when finished, one of those booths erected for similar purposes in Bartholomew Fair, but is far less substantial. Indeed a common apartment is all that is necessary for the performance of a Chinese play. They have no scenical deception to assist the story, as in the modern theatres of Europe; and the odd expedients to which they are some-

* ut supra. Grozier, vol. ii. p. 417.

times driven by the want of scenery are not many degrees above Nick Bottom's "bush of thorns and a lanthorn, to disfigure or to present the person of moonshine;" or the man with "some plaister, or some lome, or some rough cast about him, to signify wall;" thus a general is ordered upon an expedition to a distant province; he mounts a stick, or brandishes a whip, or takes in his hand the reins of a bridle, and striding three or four times round the stage in the midst of a tremendous crash of gongs, drums, and trumpets, he stops short, and tells the audience where he is got to; if the wall of a city is to be stormed, three or four soldiers lie down on each other to "present wall." A tolerable judgment may be formed of what little assistance the imaginations of an English audience derived from scenical deception, by the state of the drama and the stage, as described by Sir Philip Sidney,

about the year 1583. "Now you shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we have news of shipwreck in the same place; then we are to blame, if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that, comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke; and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while in the mean time two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field."* Inigo Jones appears to be the first who invented *painted cloths* for moveable scenes, which were used at Oxford in 1605.

It is very true that stage players are not held in great respect by the Chinese; and Cibot had probably read the statute† against

* Malone's Shakespeare, Vol. 2, p. 57.

† Ta-tsing-leu-lee, p. 410

civil or military officers of government, or the sons of those who possess hereditary rank, frequenting the company of prostitutes and actresses, which led him into the mistake of the juxta-position of their trading concerns, a mistake, the more likely to be committed, as he frankly owns he knows very little of the matter, and takes no interest in the subject. We must be cautious, however, in estimating the conduct of the Chinese from their moral maxims or legal precepts: there is no people on earth whose practice is so much at variance with their professed principles; as a striking instance of this remark, it may be observed, that the late Emperor *Kien-lung*, in the teeth of the above mentioned statute, took an actress for one of his inferior wives or concubines; since which, it is said, females have been prohibited from appearing on the stage, and their places supplied by boys, and those creatures who are of neither

sex. No women ever appeared on the Greek and the Roman theatres; but the characters in the dramas of the latter, as in those of China, were sometimes played by eunuchs. The soft and delicate female characters of Shakespeare had not the advantage of being played by a female during his life; Mrs. Betterton, about 1660, being the first, or about the first, female who played Juliet and Ophelia. It is observed in the prologue to the Moor of Venice, in introducing the first female who played Desdemona,

“’Tis possible a virtuous woman may
Abhor all sorts of looseness, and yet play.”*

No prohibition, however, of females acting on the Chinese stage, appears in the code of laws; but it is enacted, that “all strolling players, who shall be guilty of purchasing the sons or daughters of *free* persons, in order to educate them as actors or

* Malone’s Shakespeare, Vol. 2, p. 93.

actresses ; or who shall be guilty of marrying or adopting as children such free persons, shall, in each case, be punished with a hundred blows of the bamboo"*—and the same punishment is extended to the seller of free persons, and to females born of free parents voluntarily intermarrying with strolling players.

It has been said, that in Peking alone there are several hundred companies of comedians, when the court is there, and that at other times they travel about from one city to another. A company generally consists of eight or ten persons, who are literally the servants or slaves of the master or manager. They travel about from place to place in a covered barge, on canals or rivers near to which most great cities are situated ; these barges are their habitations, and in these they are instructed in their parts by

* Ta-tsing-leu-lee, p. 410.

the master. When called on to perform before a party, a list of the plays they are prepared to represent is put into the hands of the master of the feast, who consults his guests as to the choice to be made; this done, the *dramatis personæ* are read over; and if it should happen that a name occurs therein, corresponding with the name of any of the guests, another piece is immediately chosen, in order that no offensive act or allusion in the play may be coupled with the name of the auditor. Perhaps, however, this restrained delicacy is only on paper, and not followed up in practice; just as the statute which prohibits musicians and stage-players from representing, in any of their performances, "emperors, empresses, famous princes, ministers, and generals of former ages," is perpetually infringed, such representations being, in fact, the favourite and most usual subjects of theatric exhibition.

Indeed there is a saving clause, which says, that “this law is not intended to prohibit the exhibition upon the stage of fictitious characters of just and upright men, of chaste wives, and pious and obedient children, all which may tend to dispose the minds of the spectators to the practice of virtue.”*

When the common people wish for a theatrical entertainment, they subscribe among themselves a sum sufficient to cover the expense of erecting the temporary theatre and paying the actors, which is said to be very moderate. De Guignes says, that the temples or pagodas are sometimes used for theatres,† which is not impossible, as they are the common places of resort for gamblers, and the lodging houses of foreign ambassadors, and officers travelling in the public service. But neither in this respect would the

* Ta-tsing-leu-lee, p. 418.

† Voyage à Peking, Tom. 2, p. 322.

Chinese be singular ; our old *mysteries* and *moralties* were frequently played in churches. Taverns in China have also a large room set apart for the entertainment of guests with theatrical exhibitions ; just as in England, companies of players had occasional stages erected in the yards of the principal inns, in Queen Elizabeth's time.

If the missionaries have communicated little information respecting the actual state of theatrical representations in China, the descriptions, which occasional visitors to that country have given of the actual state of scenic exhibitions, convey a tolerably correct notion of what they are : and they certainly are not of a nature to give us any very exalted notion of the state of the drama, or of the refinement of the people. The most singular and inexplicable part of the subject is, that those representations would appear to descend into lowness and vulgarity, in

the inverse ratio of the rank and situation in life of the parties for whose amusement they are exhibited. Thus, at the court of Pekin, and in presence of his Imperial Majesty, Ysbrandt Ives, the Russian ambassador in 1692, was entertained with jugglers, posture-makers, and harlequins, while on his way thither, and not far from the Great Wall, the governor of a city entertained him with a regular play. "First," says he, "entered a very beautiful lady, magnificently dressed in cloth of gold, adorned with jewels, and a crown on her head, singing her speech, with a charming voice, and agreeable motion of the body, playing with her hands, in one of which she held a fan. The prologue thus performed, the play followed, the story of which turned upon a Chinese emperor, long since dead, who had behaved himself well towards his country, and in honour of whose memory the play was written.

Sometimes he appeared in royal robes, with a flat ivory sceptre in his hand, and sometimes his officers shewed themselves with ensigns, arms and drums, &c. and by intervals a sort of farce was acted by their lacqueys, whose antick dress and painted faces, were as well as any I have seen in Europe; and as far as was interpreted to me, their farce was very diverting, especially part of it which represented a person who had in his marriage been cheated by a debauched wife, and fancying her constant to him, had the mortification to see another make love to her before his face."*

Mr. Bell, who accompanied the Russian ambassador to Pekin in 1719, describes the court amusements to consist of wrestling, sham-fights, tumbling, posture-making, and fire-works. At an entertainment given to the gentlemen of the embassy, by one of

* Harris's Voyages, Vol. 2, p. 939.

the Emperor's sons, the amusements were somewhat better. Speaking of the comedians, he says, "There entered on the stage seven warriors, all in armour, with different weapons in their hands, and terrible vizards on their faces. After they had taken a few turns about the stage, and surveyed each other's armour, they at last fell a quarrelling; and, in the encounter, one of the heroes was slain. Then an angel descended from the clouds, in a flash of lightning, with a monstrous sword in his hand, and soon parted the combatants, by driving them all off the stage; which done, he ascended in the same manner he came down, in a cloud of fire and smoke. This scene was succeeded by several comical farces, which, to me, seemed very diverting, though in a language I did not understand."* But the comedy

* Bell's Travels from St. Petersburg, p. 288.

performed at a tavern in Peking, "by a company of players maintained by the house," at an entertainment given to them by "a young Chinese gentleman," afforded to all great pleasure; and "the performers consisted of both men and women, well dressed, and of decent behaviour."*

Lord Macartney, in his own journal, describes the wrestling, tumbling, wire-dancing, conjuring, and fire-works, that were exhibited at his introduction to the late Emperor Kien-lung, and seems to speak of them with great contempt, except the ingenuity with which the Chinese had displayed their art in clothing fire with all manner of colours and shapes. Their "wretched dramas," as he calls them, are thus described. "The theatrical entertainments consisted of great variety, both tragical and comical; several

* Bell's Travels from St. Petersburg, p. 310.

distinct pieces were acted in succession, though without any apparent connexion with one another. Some of them were historical, and others of pure fancy, partly in *recitativo*, partly in singing, and partly in plain speaking, without any accompaniment of instrumental music, but abounding in battles, murders, and most of the usual incidents of the drama. Last of all, was the grand pantomime, which, from the approbation it met with, is, I presume, considered a first rate effort of invention and ingenuity. It seemed to me, as far as I could comprehend it, to represent the marriage of the Ocean and the Earth. The latter exhibited her various riches and productions, dragons and elephants and tygers and eagles and ostriches, oaks and pines, and other trees of different kinds. The ocean was not behind hand, but poured forth on the stage the wealth of his dominions, under the figures of whales

and dolphins, porpesses and leviathans, and other sea-monsters, besides ships, rocks, shells, sponges, and corals, all performed by concealed actors, who were quite perfect in their parts, and performed their characters to admiration. These two marine and land regiments, after separately parading in a circular procession for a considerable time, at last joined together, and, forming one body, came to the front of the stage, when, after a few evolutions, they opened to the right and left, to give room for the whale, who seemed to be the commanding officer, to waddle forward ; and who, taking his station exactly opposite to the Emperor's box, spouted out of his mouth into the pit, several tons of water, which quickly disappeared through the perforations of the floor. This ejaculation was received with the highest applause, and two or three of the great men at my elbow desired me to take particular notice of

it; repeating, at the same time ‘*hao ! hung hao !*—charming, delightful !’*

Mr. Barrow, in describing the amusements given to the Dutch ambassadors in 1795, from the journal of a gentleman in their suite, speaks of posture making, rope-dancing, “and a sort of pantomimic performance, the principal characters of which were men dressed in skins, and going on all fours, intended to represent wild beasts ; and a parcel of boys, habited in the dresses of mandarins, who were to hunt them.”† And again, after the whole court had been terribly frightened by an eclipse of the moon, an entertainment was given to the ambassadors, during which “a pantomime, intended to be an exhibition of the battle of the dragon and the moon, was represented before the full court.

* Life of the Earl of Macartney, Vol. 2.

† Barrow’s Travels in China, p. 216.

‡ Ibid. 216.

In this engagement, two or three hundred priests, bearing lanterns suspended at the ends of long sticks, performed a variety of evolutions, dancing and capering about, sometimes over the plain, and then over chairs and tables, affording to his Imperial Majesty, and to his courtiers, the greatest pleasure and satisfaction." De Guignes also, who accompanied these ambassadors, describes this scene as a very puerile and ludicrous representation. "A number of Chinese," he says, "placed at the distance of six feet from one another, now entered, bearing two long dragons of silk or paper, painted blue, with white scales, and stuffed with lighted lamps. These two dragons, after saluting the Emperor with due respect, moved up and down with great composure; when the moon suddenly made her appearance, upon which they began to run after her. The moon, however, fearlessly placed

herself between them, and the two dragons, after surveying her for some time, and concluding, apparently, that she was too large a morsel for them to swallow, judged it prudent to retire ; which they did with the same ceremony as they entered. The moon, elated with her triumph, then withdrew with prodigious gravity : a little flushed, however, with the chase which she had sustained.”*

It would seem, however, that meanness and vulgarity are not the most objectionable charges to which the exhibitions of the Chinese stage are obnoxious ; some of them being grossly indecent and obscene. An instance is mentioned by Mr. Barrow, of a woman being condemned to be flayed alive, for the murder of her husband ; she appears on the stage not only naked, but completely excoriated : and he adds, that the European gentlemen at Canton, are sometimes so

* Voyage à Peking, Vol. 1, p. 421.

disgusted with the filthy and obscene exhibitions, as to leave the theatre.* “The history of husbands deceived by their mistresses,” says M. de Guignes, “being frequently the subject of their comedies, there occur therein sometimes situations so free, and in which the actor exhibits so much truth, that the scene becomes extremely indecent”—and he mentions an instance of which he was an eye-witness, where the heroine of the piece “devint grosse et accoucha sur le théâtre d’un enfant.” The piece was called the *See-hou* Pagoda, being the history of the destruction of the pagoda in ruins on that famous lake described by Mr. Barrow under the name of *Lui-fung-ta*, the temple of the thundering winds. “Several genii mounted upon serpents, and marching along the margin of the lake, opened the scene; a neighbouring bonze shortly after made love to one

* Travels in China, p. 222.

of these goddesses, who, in spite of the remonstrances of her sister, listened to the young man, married him, became pregnant, and was delivered of a child upon the stage, who very soon found itself in a condition to walk about. Enraged at this scandalous adventure, the genii drove away the bonze, and finished by striking the pagoda with lightning, and reducing it to the ruined condition in which it now appears.*

As scenes like these are stated to have thrown the audience into raptures, M. de Guignes very naturally concludes the real character of the Chinese to be vicious. We must not, however, judge too harshly on performances, which, for "licentious pleasures," we could fairly match them several hundred years after those of the Chinese were written. Warton has observed, that "gross and open obscenities" enter into our

* Voyage à Pekin, Vol. 2, p. 324.

old mysteries or religious representations ; that in a play of the “ Old and New Testament,” Adam and Eve were both exhibited on the stage *naked*, and appeared in the subsequent scene with their fig-leaves ; and Malone says, this kind of primitive exhibition was revived in the time of James the First ; “ several persons appearing almost entirely naked, in a pastoral exhibited at Oxford before the King and Queen, and the ladies who attended her.”

Mr. Barrow has conjectured, that the low and trifling amusements of the court, may have been introduced by the Tartars, as more congenial to their rude and unpolished manners, while the songs and recitative of the regular drama are more suited to the genius and spirit of the ceremonious Chinese. The two Mahomedans who visited China are silent on the subject ; and Marco Polo only observes, that at the Emperor's feasts were

buffoons, and players on musical instruments, and posture-masters. At that time, however, a Tartar dynasty also occupied the throne.

As far as the mere spectacle is concerned, the several travellers we have mentioned could not well be mistaken. Some deduction, however, ought probably to be made, on account of their ignorance of the language. The absurdities that strike the eye they are capable of describing, but the dialogue of the regular drama, being utterly unintelligible, ceases to create any interest. What their merits and defects may therefore be, Europeans have hitherto possessed very slender means of forming a sound judgment. A garbled translation of a single drama by Pere Premare, a jesuit, is the solitary specimen of this kind of composition in any European language, before that which is now offered to the public. It is called the Orphan of Chao, and forms one of a collection of one hundred plays, written

under the dynasty of Yuen,* in the fourteenth century. Voltaire, who adapted the subject to the French stage, considers it as a valuable monument of Chinese literature at that early period, barbarous as it is when compared with the dramatic art in Europe, but far superior to any thing that Europe could boast at the time it was written. He considers it at least equal to the English and Spanish tragedies of the seventeenth century ; and observes that, “ like the monstrous farces of Shakespeare, and of Lopez de Vega, which have been called tragedies, the action of the Chinese piece continues five and twenty years.”—“ Monstrous,” however, as they may be, few Englishmen would give up the worst “ farce” of Shakespeare, for the heavy monotony and blustering declamation of the best “ tragedy” of Voltaire. He admits that “ the Orphan of Chao,” notwithstanding the

* This dynasty commenced in 1260, and ceased in 1333.

improbability of the occurrences, has something in it which interests us; and that, in spite of the innumerable crowd of events, they are all exhibited in the most clear and distinct manner—but these he considers as its only beauties; unity of time and action, sentiment, character, eloquence, passion, all, he says, are wanting. Some of them, it is true, are wanting in Premare's translation, because he has omitted most of the poetry, or those parts which have been compared with the Greek chorus, and in which sentiment, eloquence, passion, are all expressed; that is to say, he has left out the very best parts of the play. Our countryman, Dr. Hurd, in his "Discourse on Poetical Imitation," formed a very different opinion of this tragedy from that of Voltaire. He conceived that it embraces the two essentials of dramatic poetry, unity and integrity of action—and a close connection of the incidents of the story; for, first, he

observes “the action is strictly one; the destruction of the House of Chao is the single event on which our attention turns from the beginning; we see it gradually prepared and brought on; and with its completion the tragedy finishes. Secondly, the action proceeds with as much rapidity as Aristotle himself demands”—and having noticed its resemblance in many points to the *Electra* of Sophocles—“let me add,” says he, “an intermixture of songs in passionate parts, heightened into sublime poetry, and somewhat resembling the character of the ancient chorus.” Had Premare translated more of these lyrics, he would probably have found the resemblance still more complete.

The comedy of an “Heir in his Old Age,” is the simple representation of a story in domestic life—a plain “unvarnished tale,” in which Chinese manners and Chinese feelings are faithfully delineated and expressed; in a

natural manner, and in appropriate language. Two things, however, must be borne in mind by the European reader, to enable him to enter fully into the spirit of this play—first, that filial piety is, among the Chinese, the first of virtues, and the lack of it, one of the worst of crimes ; that it is the grand basis on which all the religious, moral, and civil institutions of the empire are founded ; that the greatest misfortune in life is the want of a son to honour and console his aged parents, and to visit annually their tombs when dead—and, secondly, that to afford every means of procuring a son, a man may take inferior wives or concubines, who are generally purchased from poor relations ; such wives having no rights of their own, and their children being considered as the children of the first or legitimate wife, who call her by the name of mother, and are entitled to the same rights and privileges as her own children.

The *dramatis personæ* of this play are made up entirely of the members of a family in the middling class of society, consisting of an old man—his wife—his second or inferior wife—his nephew—his son-in-law—and his daughter. The old man, having amassed considerable wealth by trade, and having no son to console him in his old age, and to perform the obsequies at his tomb, had taken a second wife, whose pregnancy is announced in the opening of the play. In order to propitiate heaven to favour him with a son in his old age, he makes a sacrifice of all the small debts due to him, by burning the documents, which at the same time serves to quiet some scruples of conscience as to the mode in which part of his money had been acquired. He then divides his property between his wife and his married daughter, giving to his nephew, (a deceased brother's son), a hundred pieces of silver, and sending

him away to seek his fortune, the wife, owing to an old quarrel with his deceased mother, leading him a most unhappy life at home. The old gentleman then sets out for his estate in the country, recommending his pregnant wife to the humane treatment of his family, and in the hope of receiving from them speedy congratulations on the birth of a son.

He is no sooner departed, however, when the son-in-law cannot conceal from the daughter his disappointment at the pregnancy of the old man's second wife, as, if she brings forth a girl, he will lose half the family property, and if a son, the whole. His wife soothes him by a hint how easily she may be got rid of, and the old man persuaded that she had suddenly disappeared; and shortly after both the son-in-law and the audience are left to infer that she has actually contrived to put her to death. In the mean time, the old man waits

the result in great anxiety; his family appear in succession to console him for the loss of his second wife, which he is reluctantly brought to believe. In the bitterness of his disappointment, he bursts into tears, and expresses strong suspicions of some foul play. He attributes his misfortunes to his former thirst of gain, resolves to fast for seven days, and to bestow alms publicly at a neighbouring temple, in the hope that the objects of his charity may treat him as a father. Among the beggars at the temple, his nephew appears, in the most hopeless state of poverty, being reduced to take up his lodging under the furnace of a pottery; he is insulted by the son-in-law, and reproached by the old wife; but his uncle, moved with compassion, contrives to give him a little money, and earnestly advises him to be punctual in visiting the tombs of his family at the approaching spring, assuring him that a due

attention to filial piety must ultimately lead to wealth. The nephew accordingly appears at the tombs, performs the rights of oblation, as far as his poverty will admit, and invokes the shades of his ancestors to commiserate his distress, and to grant him their protection. He no sooner departs than the uncle and aunt appear, and express their indignation that their own daughter and son-in-law have neglected their duty, in not being there with the customary offerings; they observe that, from the earth being turned up, and paper burnt, that some needy person must have been there, and conclude it to be their nephew. The scene of the tombs, and the reflections to which it gives rise in the old man's mind, have considerable interest; he reasons with his wife, convinces her that the nephew is more worthy, as well as nearer in blood, than the son-in-law; she relents, and expresses a wish to make him reparation;

he appears, a conciliation takes place, and he is again received into the family. Soon after this, the son-in-law and daughter appear, with a great noise, and a procession of village officers, to perform the ceremonies; but are received by their parents with bitter reproaches for their tardy piety and ingratitude, and ordered never to enter their doors again. On the old man's birth-day, however, they send to ask permission to pay their respects, when, to the utter astonishment and unbounded joy of the old man, his daughter presents him with his second wife and her son, now about three years of age, both of whom, it appears, had been secreted by the daughter, and supported, out of affection for her father, and unknown to the husband, who had supposed them to have been otherwise disposed of. The daughter is separated from her husband, and taken back into her family; a new arrangement is made

for the disposal of the old man's property, the daughter to have a third, the nephew a third, and the little son a third; and the piece concludes with expressions of joy and gratitude for the old gentleman having been blessed with "an heir in his old age."

Such is the brief outline of the fable; the unity and integrity of action and design are strictly adhered to, and all the incidents are closely connected with the story, which turns entirely on the misery arising out of the want of an heir to perform the duties which filial piety demand, both to the living and the dead. The time employed in the course of the piece is three years, but the events follow each other in so natural a manner, and with such uninterrupted rapidity, that the time elapsed would not be perceived but for the age of the child brought forward in the concluding act. The several scenes and acts are as properly divided as those of an European

drama ; the sentiments are naturally expressed, often tender and affecting, and always friendly to virtue. The translator observes, that a few passages which were grossly indecent, have been omitted in the translation ; the Chinese, with all their politeness, are coarse in their expressions ; and we have seen that, from a too close adherence to nature and to facts, the scenic representations are often exceedingly gross and indelicate. “ *Ils mettent,*” says De Guignes, “ *trop de la verité dans le scène.*”

The lyrical compositions, which prevail more in tragedy than in comedy, certainly bear a strong resemblance to the chorus of the old Greek tragedy ; like the chorus too, they are sung with an accompaniment of music. The translator seems to think that these passages are chiefly intended to gratify the ear, and that sense is very often sacrificed to sound ; even if this were the case, examples

of the same kind might be produced nearer home. Perhaps, however, their obscurity may be owing to the nature of the written language, in which associations of ideas are presented rather to the eye, or to the recollection, than to the ear, by a combination of signs or symbols, on the choice of which the force of the expression must depend. Mr. Morrison observes, that “without extensive knowledge of their ancient poetry, and the customs and manners of the country, it is very difficult to understand their poetical compositions. The very point and beauty of the piece often depends on some slight allusion, which a foreigner does not perceive; added to which, the style is peculiarly concise, and unusual words are introduced.”*

The opening or prologue of a Chinese drama, in which the principal personages come forward to declare the characters of the piece, and to let the audience into the

* Morrison's Chinese Grammar, p. 275.

argument or story on which the action is to turn, bears a strong resemblance to the prologues of the Greek drama, and particularly to those of Euripides.

In comedy the dialogue is carried on in the common colloquial language, but in the higher order of historical and tragical plays, the tone of voice is elevated considerably above its natural pitch, and continued throughout in a kind of whining monotony, having some resemblance to, but wanting the modulations and cadences of, the recitative in the Italian opera; as in this too, the sentiments of grief, joy, love, hatred, revenge, &c. are, in the Chinese dramas, usually thrown into lyric poetry, and sung in soft or boisterous airs, according to the sentiment expressed, and the situation of the actor; they are also accompanied with loud music, the performers being placed on the back part of the stage.

Whatever may be the merits and the

defects of the Chinese drama, it is unquestionably their own invention. The only nation from whence they could have borrowed anything, is that of Hindostan, from whence they imported the religion of Budh ; but as we know nothing of the Hindoo drama, except from the single specimen of *Sacountala*, translated by Sir William Jones, in a manner, it is said, sufficiently *free* ; and as that drama differs more from the Chinese than the latter from the Greek, Roman, English, or Italian, there is not the slightest grounds for supposing that the one was borrowed from the other. There is, indeed, a characteristic difference between them ; the one adhering strictly to nature, and describing human manners and human feelings ; the other soaring beyond nature, into the labyrinth of an intricate and inexplicable mythology.

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 consequences.

THE Chinese Play, of which the following is a translation, was selected from an old collection, named *Yuen-jin-pě-tchung*; from which the “Orphan of Chao,” translated into French in Du Halde’s compilation respecting China, was also taken. It is well known, that on this last, Voltaire grounded one of his best tragedies, “L’Orphelin de la Chine.” A considerable portion of the plays of the Chinese consists of a sort of irregular

verse, which is sung or chaunted with music. This is often very obscure in its import; and, as (according to the Chinese themselves) the gratification of the ear is its main object, sense itself appears sometimes to be neglected for the sake of a pleasing sound. That portion of their plays, on the other hand, which is merely spoken, is in the language of common conversation, and is in most cases as intelligible, as the other is sometimes obscure. In the following translation, the chief wish of its author has been to render *both* into English in such a manner as would best convey the spirit of the original, without departing far from its literal meaning. He cannot flatter himself that he has

in every individual instance realised this wish, but thinks that he can safely answer for its general accuracy. Where doubtful passages occurred, the opinion of two or more natives was asked, and that sense adopted, which appeared to be most consistent with the idiom of the language, and with the scope of the original.

A few passages, and they are but few, which were either grossly indecent, or insufferably tedious, have been purposely omitted in the translation.

Canton, 1816.

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(London, 1816.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Lew-tsung-sheu, *the Old Man.*

Le-she, *his Wife.*

Seaou-mei, *his second Wife.*

Yin-chang, *his Daughter ; Wife to*
Chang-lang.

Chang-lang, *his Son-in-law.*

Yin-sun, *his Nephew.*

Servants, &c.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Lew-tung-chen, the Old Man

Lo-che, his Wife

Sonou-mei, his second Wife

Yin-chang, his Daughter; Wife to

Chang-lang

Chang-lang, his Son-in-law

Yin-sun, his Nephew

Servants, &c

2

LAOU-SENG-URH, &c.

SIE-TSZE, OR OPENING.

SCENE.—*The Old Man's House.*

Enter LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, *his* Wife,
CHANG-LANG, *and* YIN-SUN.

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU [*comes forward and speaks.*]

I AM a man of Tung-ping-foo ; my surname is Lew, my name Tsung-sheu. I am sixty years of age, and Le-she, my wife, fifty-eight. My daughter, Yin-

chang's age is twenty-seven, and that of her husband, Chang-lang, thirty. I once had a brother, named Lew-tsung-taou, whose only son was in his infancy called Yin-sun. [*He sighs.*] This child has a most unhappy destiny! — my brother died very early, and left a widow. As she and my wife could not agree together, my sister-in-law wished, with her son, to spend the days of mourning in her own family. Thus she might, in the first place, depend on her parents for support; and secondly, by the labour of her hands, to procure something towards her son's education. — Soon afterwards, this sister-in-law suddenly died, and left her son destitute. His relations, upon this, said to him,

“What are you doing here, child?

“have you not an uncle at Tung-ping-

“foo, well known to every one? Why

“do you not go to him?” They gave

the youth some money for the journey.

He came to Tung-ping-foo to seek me,

bringing his mother's bones with him ;

and I had them deposited with those of

my brother. This young man is now

twenty-five—Alas ! that wife of mine

still remembers her quarrel with his

mother ; for every slight occasion, she

abuses him ; and frequently causes him

to be beaten. She cannot bear even the

sight of my nephew !

Wife. [*coming forward.*] What say

you?—I cannot bear the sight of your

nephew ?

Lew. Ah! don't raise a disturbance!—It was only my way of talking:—don't let the people in the street laugh at us!—[*to the Nephew.*] Yin-sun, you have sense enough to perceive, and it is needless for me to prove, that you cannot live here! On my estate there are two thatched cottages; you may have one cleared out for yourself, and get a livelihood by giving instructions to the village children.—

Wife. I wish to retain those cottages, for the purpose of keeping my asses in them; so don't you meddle with my concerns.

Lew. What do you want with asses?

Wife. Want?—I want them for cultivating my ground, for grinding and

winnowing my corn, for carrying provisions, and also for my own riding. How, then, can I do without them?—But you may give that fellow one of the cottages.

Lew. Well, then, one will do.—Chang-lang, do you count out two hundred ounces of silver, and give them to Yin-sun.

Chang. Very well.

Wife. What; do we owe him this money?—He shall not have two hundred ounces; I will allow him only one hundred.

Lew. You must be obeyed;—one hundred will do then!

Chang. So, he is to have one hundred ounces of silver. [*aside.*] As he

is no calculator, I will just keep twenty for myself. Poor Yin-sun ! you will come to nothing in this world :—when I have given you this money you will soon squander it away.

[*Aside. Gives the money.*]

Lew. Now you have got this money, be careful of it, Yin-sun, and contrive some plan for your livelihood.

Yin. Thanks to you all, my relations.

YIN-SUN, *solus.*

My uncle would have given me two hundred ounces, but that aunt of mine prevented him, and I have got only one hundred. Chang-lang was desired to count them for me ; but I have known him to be given to nipping off corners

for himself, — so I will count them again. Sixty ounces—seventy ounces—eighty ounces;—here are only eighty ounces!—I will follow instantly, and inform my uncle.

YIN-SUN, LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife,
CHANG-LANG.

Wife. How, then?—Do you dare to reject the money? Well, if you do not want it, return it to me.

Yin. I wish to ask my uncle how much money he ordered to be given to me.

Lew. I ordered you one hundred ounces.

Yin. And I have got only eighty.

Lew. Chang-lang, you were directed

to give Yin-sun one hundred ounces ; how happens it that you gave him only eighty?—Have you appropriated the other twenty to yourself?

Chang. Father, I gave him one hundred ounces.

Yin. Here is the money ; do you count it.

Chang. Give it to me, and I will count it. — Seventy ounces — eighty ounces. — [*shakes the rest from his sleeve.*]—Is not the money here?—You made a mistake of twenty ounces !

Yin. It is you, Chang-lang, who have made the mistake ; you have just shaken them from your sleeve. But, I now leave your doors ; and, though I should

be dying of cold and hunger, will never enter them again. [*Exit.*

YIN-SUN *solus.*

My uncle, for the sake of my father, is willing to pay me some regard ; but my aunt favours her son-in-law, Chang-lang. He who is so well off is surnamed Chang, and is of another family ; while I, who am so persecuted, am surnamed Lew, and belong to the same. —Alas ! Yin-sun, why dost thou inveigh against others, while thou shouldst be lamenting thy own unlucky destiny ?

‘ Supinely gazing, now I vent my sighs,

‘ Now, bending down, in tears my sorrow flows ;

‘ The wealthy alien claims connubial ties,

‘ The needy kinsman no relation knows !’

Exit.

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, *solus*.

So! Yinsun is gone! I intended to divide my property equally between my daughter, and my nephew; considering in my own mind, that when once a man has attained the age of eight times eight, or sixty-four years, and a woman that of seven times seven, or forty-nine, they are not likely to have any more children; and I have only four years to reach that period. But Seaou-mei is now pregnant, but whether of a girl or a boy I know not.—I am fearful that the rest of my family, looking only to my property, may change their disposition towards her; and I shall, now, therefore, speak out my mind to them.
—Chang-lang!

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife, Daughter,
CHANG-LANG, SEAOU-MEI.

Wife. Now that your nephew is gone, you begin to think about your son-in-law.

Lew. Do you know what I am about to say to him?

Wife. Not I; what is it that you wish to say?

Lew. Changlang, you have now been my son-in-law these ten years. My wife and I have become old without having a son. How then could you bear to leave us alone? From this day forward take up your abode with us.

Wife. Children, you owe your thanks to your father.

Lew. You see, wife, they are very

well satisfied.—Chang-lang, bring me the account-book, which contains all the money due to me, that I may see what the sum-total amounts to.

Chang. Here is the book, sir.

Lew. Seaou-mei, bring me a lighted lamp.

Seaou. Here is the lamp.

Lew. [*putting the papers into the flame.*] Thus I burn and destroy the whole. [*Chang-lang endeavours to snatch the papers.*] So, are you not afraid of burning your fingers? — What would the fellow do with the papers?

Wife. When I remember that your trading schemes in your younger days took you to the farthest extremes of

north and south ; that you travelled the canals in boats, and rode over the country on horseback ; that you crossed rivers, and even the sea ; and having lent out some of your money, obtained bonds for its security ;—how is it that you now make so little account of the same, as to destroy the whole in a blaze ?

Lew. Where was the necessity of calculating upon such small sums ; don't you consider that I am worth one hundred thousand ounces ?

Wife. Yes ; and more.—

Lew. I mean now to take my money, and to divide it equally, giving one half to you, my children ; and the other half I shall deliver, wife, to you.

Wife. Children, return thanks to your father.

Chang. Father, receive our thanks.

Lew. They are very well pleased you see. Wife, take good care of one-half of the money.—Every one in Tung-ping-foo says of me, “that old fellow is “rich to no purpose; he cannot part “with any thing; he’s a miserly slave.” —I am now determined to make use of my money, and to pass a few jovial years with my friends.

Wife. You are very right, husband; you are very right.

Lew. I will spend a few days at my country house.

Wife. I shall give directions to prepare a horse for you.—When you are

gone, you need not concern yourself about the family affairs ; as I am here, you may set your heart at rest on that score.

Lew. I have a word to say to you, wife ; may I venture to say it ?

Wife. Whatever you have to say, speak on.

Lew. Then I shall anxiously expect to receive a letter of congratulation from you.—What may Seaou-mei be compared to ?—When I borrow a vessel from a neighbour, in order to procure wine at home, I wait only till the wine is obtained, and then return the vessel to its owner. Seaou-mei is now pregnant. Whether she produces a boy or a girl, the same will be your property.

—You may then hire out her services, or sell her, as it best pleases you : the matter rests entirely with you.

Wife. You say very right, husband.

Lew. Wife !

Wife. What have you to say ?

Lew. That girl, Seaou-mei, has sometimes been very troublesome to you, and I am afraid that she will continue to vex you. For my sake, however, when she deserves to be chastised, do you be satisfied with merely scolding her.

Wife. It is unnecessary for you to instruct me : I know my duty.

Lew. I wish to tell you, with regard to Seaou-mei, that if she offends you, and deserves a scolding, you may scold her as much as you please.

Wife. You may be at rest ; I tell you I know what to do.

Lew. Wife !

Wife. Well ! something more about Seaou-mei ?

Lew. Well, well : that is enough !

Wife. What was your motive in taking the memorandums of what people owed to you, and burning them all ?

Lew. Ah, you don't know ; I had a motive indeed ! [*sings.*

‘ Do'st ask me why, by this rash hand,

‘ A treasure to the flames was given ?

‘ Why, but t' avert, ere yet too late,

‘ The vengeance of offended Heaven !

‘ Full sixty years, by various arts,

‘ For wealth I've toil'd, without an heir ;

‘ Who knows but Heaven may now relent,

‘ And listen to a suppliant's prayer ? ’

Wife ! what may I be compared to ? —

- ‘ See’st thou not yonder aged tree,
- ‘ That flings its wither’d arms around ?
- ‘ Lo ! from its roots a sucker breaks
- ‘ Its passage through the yielding ground.’

But this Seaou-mei,—do you think,
wife, you can treat her kindly?—What
does she resemble ?

- ‘ See’st thou not yonder bending flower,
- ‘ Whose roots the cooling waters lave ?
- ‘ Ah ! see, it bows its head to meet
- ‘ The freshness of the limpid wave !’

—Take care, wife, you do not apply
boiling water to it !

Wife. I know, I know !—Son, do
you attend your father to the cottage.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Old Man's House.*

Enter Daughter and CHANG-LANG.

Chang. [*aside.*] — Misfortune has reached me ere my happiness was complete!—Why did I become the son-in-law of Lew-tsung-sheu? — It was entirely on account of the old fellow's great wealth, and his having no heir, that I allied myself to his family.—His money was my grand object!—I never thought that Seaou-mei would become pregnant, as she is.—If it proves to be

a daughter, I have been considering that I must give up half the fortune ; and if a son, the whole.—I shall thus have made an empty bargain !

Daugh. Chang-lang, how is it that your brows have lately assumed so mysterious a cast?—

Chang. If you do not know, I will tell you honestly, that my only reason for becoming your father's son-in-law was, because he had no son ; and therefore, his whole fortune must afterwards become mine.—As Seaou-mei is now pregnant, I must part with either a half, or the whole of it, according as she produces a girl or a boy.—This is the cause of my trouble.

Daugh. I have long had the same

idea with yourself:—how do you think I have contrived about Seaou-mei?

Chang. * Surely you are something more than wife to me!—what said you?

Daugh. I will first tell my mother that Seaou-mei, under pretence of going out to buy something, has disappeared altogether.

Chang. An excellent device!

Daugh. I will tell her so in your presence——Mother!

Enter Wife.

Wife. What do you want with me, child?

Daugh. Mother, Seaou-mei, went

* Literally, “You are not my wife, but my mother.”

out this morning under pretence of buying something, and has disappeared altogether.

Wife. Alas, no more!—My old man, having some hopes of an heir at his great age, is happy beyond measure, and waits at his cottage for a letter of congratulation!—How has this unlucky business happened? surely you two have brought it about!

Daugh. If Seaou-mei has taken herself off early this morning, what affair is it of ours?

Wife. If she is really gone;—bring a carriage, there!—do you two go with me straight to the cottage, to inform my husband. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE.—*The Cottage.*

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, HING-URH, *a Servant.*

Lew. Ever since my arrival here, I have been anxiously expecting a letter of congratulation from home.—I have been reflecting that no being on earth can transgress the duties of his station, without meeting with an ample retribution, at least in his old age. If so, what have I to expect, who in my younger days, while engaged in trade, rose early and slept late, bore every anxiety, and knew not that I was deceiving myself, while I studied how to deceive and injure others.—*“ I made

* The parts which in the original are sung in a sort of recitative, are in the translation marked

use of what I had in seeking for more ; and got on in every way, both at home and abroad. The money came in abundantly.—I now fear that I cannot shake off the consequences of the injuries, which I inflicted on others.”——Hing-urh, when you went into the town yesterday, what did you hear my friends say of me ?

Hing. Sir, I went to buy oil ; and heard some old gentlemen say, that if you should have a daughter, well ; but if a son, they will treat you like a horse until they make you give a feast.

off with inverted commas. It is observable that Lew-tsung-sheu is the only person who sings throughout. It is in all cases confined to the principal persons. TRANS.

Lew. Don't deceive me, Hing-urh!

Hing. Sir, I dare not deceive you.

Lew. Ah! those gentlemen say more than they intend to do.—“If you give me a son, Seaou-mei, I will gladly return thanks to Heaven with the offering of fresh flowers! I will invite my neighbours; and kill my pigs and sheep.—Let them do as they promise, for if they do not abuse me, I shall not be without a son. What though I should even have a son deformed, for still he will be the gift of Heaven!”—It grows now so long that I fear something unfortunate has happened.—“What signifies whether the hour of his birth was lucky or otherwise; for if I can only rock him in his cradle, I shall retire to my grave,

and become a ghost with readiness !"—
Hing-urh !

Hing. Sir, for what purpose did you call ?

Lew. Do you look to the door, and see who has arrived.

Enter [without] Wife, Daughter, and
CHANG-LANG.

Wife. We are arrived soon.—Hing-urh, tell your master that I am come.

Hing. [*going in*] Sir, my lady, is at the door.

Lew. Is my wife arrived ! Hing-urh, kill a sheep directly. — Invite your lady in.

Hing. My lady, you are requested to enter.

Wife. Children, do you stay at the door: I will go in first.—What can I say to him?

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife.

Wife. Husband, in the quiet of this cottage your hearing has been undisturbed.

Lew. Welcome, welcome.—Have I a son?

Wife. Yes: you have a son indeed!

Lew. But what has Seaou-mei really produced?

Wife. I will tell you immediately;—do'nt be too anxious.

Lew. Then speak:—I am not anxious!

Wife. Since you came to this cottage, we all of us, in obedience to

your wishes treated Seaou-mei with the greatest kindness. We neither chastised her, nor scolded her. This morning she arose early, and under pretence of going out to buy something, has gone off altogether !

Lew. Gone !—alas, you will kill me !
—This surely is only a story :—tell me the truth, and let me rejoice with you !

Wife. It is no story ; but if you believe not me, your daughter too is at the door.—

Lew. Is she also arrived ?—ask her to come in.

Hing. [*going out*] My young lady, you are requested to enter.

Daugh. Chang-lang, stay at the door :—I will go in first.

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife, Daughter.

Lew. Welcome, daughter, welcome!
—Have you a brother?—You must nurse that brother, you know.

Daugh. Father, what brother?

Lew. That which Seaou-mei has just produced:—but after all, of what consequence is he?—I shall still be fond of you.

Daugh. Seaou-mei, without the least provocation, has ran away with another man.

Lew. Run away!—Do you both now tell the truth. What is there to fear in my knowing it?—It is all a plan concerted between you and your mother. She said “Yin-chang, when you see

your father, say that Seaou-mei has run away.—If you say that he has a son, the good man is old, and it may be feared his joy will kill him.”—This is all a plan concerted between you !

Wife. Seaou-mei has indeed run away.

Lew. And, do you venture to tell such a story, daughter ? — Of what consequence is Seaou-mei ? — I shall still be fond of you and Chang-lang.

Daugh. If you do not believe me, Chang-lang is at the door.

Lew. Is my son-in-law also come ? — Make haste and ask him to enter.

Hing. [*going out.*] Sir, you are requested to enter.

LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife, Daughter, *and*
CHANG-LANG.

Chang. Father, you have been very happy here ; it is well that you came !

Lew. Welcome, son ; welcome !—you must take care of your brother-in-law.

Chang. What brother-in-law ?

Lew. That which Seaou-mei has just produced.

Chang. Seaou-mei !—She has, without the least provocation on our part, run away with another man.

Lew. Say not so !—How ; gone !

Wife. If she is gone, she is gone.—Why should we deceive you ?—Of what consequence is the departure of this girl ?

Lew. What ! are you an old mistress

of a family, and does this not put you to the blush?

Wife. I have done nothing wrong; —what need I be ashamed of?

Lew. Of your jealousy! —When you, a woman and a wife, know not your duty, how can my family respect you. —Through the perverseness of your heart, you shew all favour to your son-in-law. —The whole of my property is in your hands and engages all your attention without satisfying you, covetous and greedy as you are! —This last blow will be the death of me! [weeps.]

Wife. [laughing] Alas! what folly to grieve for one, who without the least provocation, made off in such a shameful manner!

Lew. How vain have been my hopes;

how empty my expectations, in looking forward to such happiness!—Can you thus speak of her without considering my age?—Chang-lang, go to the four gates of the city, and set up a notice, that if any poor and distressed persons will come to-morrow at break of day to Kae-yuen temple, I will distribute money among them. — Be witness, Heaven, that I have at last repented! —“In the acquisition of my fortune, I transgressed my duty;—now I have no son; and my hopes of posterity are cut off!—What else but my avarice brought this evil upon me?—Had I acted virtuously I had not met with this!”—Hasten, Chang-lang, to give out the notice.

Chang. I obey.

Wife. So, you are going to squander your money in bestowing alms ;—if you should not do so, no one will observe it ; and if you do so, who will respect you the more ?

Lew. “ Know you not that those whom I relieve will offer incense to me, and treat me as they do their ancestors ? ”

Wife. But, even if you should do all these good things, recollect that you are old, and have not long to live. When you are dead, who will remember you ?

Lew. “ Say you, that because I am in the evening of my days, it will be useless ! — When I am dead, inter my body on the brow of some unfrequented

hill ; and plant the fir and the cypress thickly around.—Then if you fear, that posterity will not know it, write my history plainly on my tomb.—Those who happen to pass will look on it with sorrow, and exclaim, ‘ This is he who distributed money at Kae-yuen temple ! ’ ”

Wife. I believe you are right, husband : let us now return home.

Lew. Aye, let us return.—“ Sixty years have I lived here, during thirty of which I have been a rich man.—What I now suffer is the consequence of my errors, and proceeds not from any fault in my destiny.—Wife, I will go and fast for seven days successively. This, together with my alms, may,

perhaps, wash away the misdeeds of half my life. I will no longer go hunting for wealth, nor any longer engage in litigation." If I do these things, heaven will surely see them, and may perhaps yet reward me in my old age.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Entrance of a Temple.*

CHANG-LANG, *solus*.

My father-in-law desired me to get some money ready, to distribute in this Kae-yuen temple ; giving to the aged beggars, an ounce ; to the younger ones, half an ounce. It is all ready, and I must call the old people to distribute it :—here they come.

Enter LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife, and Daughter.

Lew. Chang-lang, do you take that

money you have provided, and when any beggars come, distribute it among them for me. “It was wealth that led me to spend half of my life in disquietude. For ten whole years I rested neither night nor day ; and this was all for the sake of money, which poured in upon me. —O wealth ! would that I could build some temple, where all might be supplied with thee ! —When I was young, I sometimes was ready to deprive others of it even by force ; nay, to make desperate use of the dagger, for the sake of increasing my little fortune.”

Wife. It is for the sake of wealth, that we mortals leave our families and homes ; that the father and son consent to live as far distant from

each other as the north is from the south.

Lew. It was for wealth, that with killing pain, I left my parents ;—that, with bitter anguish, I parted from my wife.

Wife. It was for wealth that you went to Soo-chow, and Han-chow, and Kwang-tong and Kwang-se ; and cared not if others died, provided that yourself succeeded !—It was certainly not with ease that you accumulated your money.

SCENE.—*Two Beggars and a Boy.*

1st Beg. Comrade, they are about to distribute money at Kae-yuen temple—Let us proceed thither to ask for some of it, and say that this son of

yours is a third person distinct from us.—When we have got a share for him, let us divide it, and buy some wine. [*sees Chang-lang.*] Sir, we crave your bounty.

Chang. Does this boy belong to you two?

1st Beg. No, he has no concern with us.

Chang. Then here's a half an ounce for him.

1st Beg. [*dividing the money.*] Comrade let us divide this, and buy some wine with it.

2d Beg. This boy is my son : what have you to do with dividing my property? You know that he is my son.

1st Beg. Wretch ! did we not agree

to divide it? why should you have it all, though you have a son? [*they quarrel.*]

Enter LEW-TSUNG-SHEU.

Lew. Chang-lang, what is the meaning of all this noise before the door?

Chang. Sir, these beggars are quarrelling about the money you have given them.

Lew. Beggars, son, are not the only persons who quarrel about money, for the rich sometimes do the same.—I will speak to them myself.—Cease your contention there!—“When I am giving you money, do you quarrel and fight without any regard to my presence?”

2d Beg. [*to the other*] Childless

wretch, how dare you practise such knavery?

Chang. Beggar, keep silence!

Lew. [*aside.*] “Those words have made my flesh tremble! ‘Childless wretch, how dare you practise such knavery!’—Oh! this certainly will be the end of me; my heart feels as if it had been sprinkled with hot oil!—Ah! though he smiles, yet under that smile he conceals a dagger!”

1st Beg. Sir, the father has begged a share of the money, and the son wants another.

Lew. “So, the father has begged a share, and the son wants another.—Do they not consider that what is ill obtained can profit them nothing?”

2d Beg. My son has been thus indulged from his infancy.

Lew. “From his infancy you should have instructed him better, instead of letting him act thus ; for it is only when the parents are rich, that the children may be humoured.”

Boy. Father, are you hungry?

2d Beg. Yes, I am hungry enough.

Boy. Then go and eat something, and come back again.

2d Beg. You say well, child ; let us go and get something to eat. [*Exeunt.*

YIN-SUN solus.

Since my uncle's wife drove me from their house, I have spent the whole of the hundred ounces which they gave

me. I am now living among the ovens of an earthenware manufactory, and sleep upon the warm cinders. I have had a breakfast, but have nothing left for a supper!—They say, that my uncle and aunt are distributing money at this Kae-yuen temple. If they give their alms to all who may come, surely, they will not refuse their own nephew!—But if I go, I am afraid of meeting with Chang-lang; who will certainly favour me with his scoffish sneers.—However, I must not mind that, now.—Well, here I am, at the door of the temple. [*seeing Chang-lang*]
—Oh Heaven, my bad luck!—There stands Chang-lang, at the door:—what is to be done?—I am almost ashamed

to be seen by him ; but there is no alternative ; so I had better speak to him.—Chang-lang !

Chang. Whence comes this smell of poverty ;—who can it be ?—Oh, it is Yin-sun !—What come you here for, you poor wretch ?

Yin. It is very true, I am poor ;—but wherefore, “ this smell of poverty ? ” —Cousin, I am come to ask for a little relief.

Chang. You are too late ; the money is all distributed ; there is none left for you ; so make haste, and be off.

Lew. [*coming out.*] Who is at the door ?

Chang. It is Yin-sun, sir.

Lew. What does he come for ?

Chang. He comes to beg a little money.

Wife. If he comes to beg for money, say, there is none for him.

Lew. Wife, what resentments can you harbour towards a beggar!

Wife. If that wretch should see our money, he will want it all; and we have none to spare for him.

[*putting up the money.*]

Lew. Tell him to come forward.—
Yin-sun, what brought you to this place?

Yin. Hearing, sir, that you were distributing money, your nephew came to borrow a little of it.

Lew. Wife, I do not ask how much; but only lend him a little.

Wife. Yin-sun, if you wish to borrow money, you must first find out three persons ; one to be your security, one a witness, and the third a notary. Find these three persons, and then I'll lend you the money; if not, I'll lend you nothing.

Lew. Pish! what do you want with all this formality for a relation of the family?

Wife. In case he should happen to die, pray, who will repay the money?

Chang. That's right, mother; you say very right!

Lew. Peace, you ugly fellow! how does it concern you?

Wife. What, are you afraid we shall frighten your worthy nephew out of his senses.

Lew. [*pointing to Chang-lang*] Wife, let me ask a question or two ;—who is he ?

Wife. He is my son-in-law.

Lew. And he ? [*pointing to Yin-sun.*]

Wife. He is your worthless nephew, abounding in faults.

Lew. He is my own nephew, is he not ?—If I wish to correct or reprove him, I may do it ; and it has no concern with you.

Wife. [*jeeringly*] O pray cease your anger : and let me intreat your superior instruction !

Lew. Yin-sun !

Yin. Your nephew is here, sir.

Wife. Oh ! if you wish to correct him, you may do it :—But what does this

Yin-sun ! Yin-sun ! mean ?—Do bring a little clay, for fear his precious skull should sustain some injury ! *

Lew. Are you waiting to see me put him to death ?

Wife. Who ever ordered you to commit murder ?

Lew. What is to be done in all this bustle !—Give me those keys.

Wife. There are the keys ; they are at your command.

Lew. Yin-sun, do you observe ?

Yin. Sir, I observe.

Lew. Daughter and son-in-law, come near.—Do you two receive these keys, and take charge of my family.

* That part of the top of the head, which is weak in childhood (the fontanel) the Chinese sometimes fortify in this manner.

Wife. Children, give thanks to your father.

Lew. You see they are very well pleased.

Chang. Many thanks to you, father! —You see, Yin-sun, all the keys are in my possession.

Lew. Nephew, what has become of the money which I before gave you?

Yin. I met with some intimate friends, sir, and spent the money with them.

Wife. So, vile creature, you have also your intimate friends, have you?

Lew. Alas! child, it is not yet time for you to have such friends! —“ When you had a little money, you treated your friends, and squandered it away daily; and now you are moneyless. To intreat your relations for subsistence is

troublesome and distressing.—As you are unrepining in poverty, and not elated by opulence, you might strive to acquire wealth as a merchant ; but this would not be so suitable for one in your condition, as to follow your original destination, and instruct the boys of your village.”

Yin. Your nephew, sir, came for the purpose of requesting a small sum of his relations, in order that he might set up some trade.

Lew. Yin-sun, my child, this is not so good, or suitable, as studying.

Yin. Trade, uncle, I assure you, will do better.

Lew. “ I tell you the qualifications of a scholar are high, but the talents for

trading need be but small ; and thus the greater number prefer the latter. But do you now go and exert yourself, like those who have studied with diligence. If you are successful in trade, from a little money you make much ; but if you study letters, your plebeian garments are changed for a scholar's gown. If you compare the two, how much superior is the literary life to that of the merchant or tradesman !—When you shall have acquired celebrity, men will vie with each other in their admiration of you. Over your head will be carried the round umbrella ; before your horse will be marshalled the two files of attendants.—Think of the toil of those who traffic, and you will see the

difference!"—Chang-lang, let the carriage be brought, and let my wife and daughter go home first; I will follow afterwards.

Chang. It is all ready, sir.

Lew. Wife, do you go home first, with Yin-chang. — This lad Yin-sun does not think correctly, and I wish to shew him his duty.

Wife. You can come at your leisure, husband; I will return home first.

[pretends to go away.]

Lew. *[to Yin-sun.]* Child, I have a great regard for you!

Yin. I know it, uncle.

Lew. Alas! my sorrow will kill me!

[weeps.]

Wife. *[making her appearance.]*

Husband, what is the matter!—Why are you weeping?

Lew. When did I weep?

Wife. The tears are now dropping from your eyes.

Lew. Alas! at my age, how should they be free from moisture!

Wife. This weakness, it seems, has come very quick upon you.

Lew. [*aside to Yin-sun.*] In my boot,* there are two pieces of silver; take them out, and be gone. Yin-sun, do you be regular in your visits to the graves of your ancestors, and in one or two years you will no doubt become rich.

* Their boots serve the Chinese instead of pockets.

Yin. Your nephew will obey you, sir.

Lew. “ The duties which during their life time we owe to our parents, I need not mention :—now that yours are dead, do you hasten and instruct yourself how to invoke their shades.—Alas ! I have no son to do this for me !—It is now your duty to decorate the tombs of the family.—Go and procure a little wine, with which you may sprinkle the graves ; endeavour to obtain in the village a little money, with which you may buy metallic paper to burn. Once in each day visit their tombs for me.—Yin-sun, follow the good advice, I gave you.—If you should prove obstinate, and not regard my instructions, you must be content to live upon what

you can get, and to remain in poverty all the days of your life."

Wife. [to *Yin-sun*.] You poor, villainous, ugly wretch!—what business have you here?—It would do my eyes good to see you die this moment! If you come again to my doors, I'll have you cut in pieces!—Oh, you will make me die with rage!—Husband, will you please to come along with me?

[*Exeunt Lew-tsung-sheu and Wife.*

YIN-SUN, solus.

She's gone!—instead of correcting me as she wished, my uncle gave me these two pieces of silver. They will serve for my subsistence in the potteries for a few days—and then—Oh Heaven! I shall die of poverty at last.

ACT III.

SCENE. — *Enter* CHANG-LANG, and
Daughter.

Chang. Though a man's destiny is fixed at his birth, it is still necessary for him to adopt a little scheming. If I did not keep in practice my deceitful arts, who would take money and present it to me?—Since my father-in-law gave me the care of his property I have been very well contented.—It is now the commencement of the Tsing-ming, and every one goes to perform his duties and make oblations at the tombs of his

ancestors. I must hasten with these dried hams and other meat offerings, and take with me the village officer to the tombs.

Enter Village Officer.

V. Off. I am the village officer. To-day being the commencement of the Tsing-ming, I have received Chang-lang's invitation to go to the tombs.—Chang-lang, here I am, ready to proceed with you.

Chang. [*to Yin-chang.*] Wife, we have hitherto gone every year to visit the tombs of your family first. Let us this year first proceed to those of my ancestors.

Daugh. No, Chang-lang; it is proper

we should go to the tombs of my family first.

V. Off. You are in the wrong.— Though your family name be *Lew*, and your husband's *Chang*, you should still go first to the tombs of his family. That will be the most correct plan.

Chang. Wife, within a hundred years after our marriage, you will be immured in the tombs of my ancestors : proceed first, therefore, to them.

Daugh. I comply : let us first proceed thither. [*Exeunt.*

Enter YIN-SUN, solus.

Yin. Since the day when my uncle gave me the two pieces of silver, I have been living about the potteries. Now is

the season of the Tsing-ming, and all ranks, both great and small, perform the sacred rites at the tombs of their respective families. My uncle said to me, Yin-sun, if you diligently honour the graves of your ancestors, in one or two years you will become rich. — Surely, he must have deposited some treasure there. When I reflect that my own ancestors, besides my father and mother, are interred in those tombs, it would be strange if I should wait till my uncle told me to go! — Though I am poor, I am still a scholar, and therefore could not possibly be deficient in this essential point of duty. I have been to the paper shop, and obtained some gilt paper by singing; I have been to the

wine shop, and procured this half-jar of wine ; I have been to the eating-shop, and obtained this cake of bread. Thus then I have not neglected my uncle's advice. From a neighbour I have borrowed this iron-hoe, and now proceed to the rites ; to burn the paper, and to trim the earth round the graves ; to perform the other ceremonies of oblations, and thus fulfil the duties of a son. In the midst of my meditations, I have arrived, it seems, at the place of tombs. Ah! Lew-tsung-sheu, in spite of your great wealth, where have you a son who shall visit your tombs.—[*performs his adorations.*—Ye parents of my father, your lives being ended, after death be immortal ! I make this obla-

tion to your shades.—Here lie my father and mother!—I, your child, the victim of poverty, reflect that during your lifetime, you turned the partial affection of my grandfather and grandmother for you, to the disadvantage of my uncle and his wife. Now, that you are dead, all the ill consequences fall upon me!—My parents! why do I repeat this maxim? “Possessing property, do not
 “exhaust it entirely, but refrain from
 “one portion in ten for the sake of
 “your children.” I repeat this, because you made use of all your property, and now I severely suffer for it. But
 “in one or two years I shall become
 “rich!”—Yin-sun has no other way of performing the duties of filial piety than

by throwing a little fresh earth on the graves ! I may be compared to the iron hoe which I hold in my hand ; but the disposition of my aunt is so unrelenting that even if I were composed of iron or stone I could not forbear to complain. They have directed my cousin, Chang-lang, to take care of the family, while I am sent to dig the ground, and to labour. Now that I have thrown up the earth, I may proceed to the rites of oblation. If I offer this cake only to the shades of my grandfather and grandmother, those of my own parents will have none.—What is to be done, to prevent their contending for it ?—This I can easily manage : I will divide the cake, and offer half to the one, and half

to the other.—Having poured out the wine, burnt the paper, and finished the oblations, I am to eat what remains of the provisions.—One hundred and five days after the winter solstice, observe the rich, with what splendour they perform the rites of the tombs. I alone am poor and destitute.—The graves of my ancestors are not heaped with dried hams and other meat offerings, nor with fragrant wines. With this iron hoe I have performed the duties of the season.—*[taking up the wine.]*—This wine is cold, and not fit to drink. I will go to one of the neighbouring cottages, and warm it. Having done this, I will return for the iron hoe.—Now to warm the wine. *[Exit.]*

Enter LEW-TSUNG-SHEU *and* Wife.

Lew. This day being the commencement of the Tsing-ming, we are proceeding to visit the tombs of our ancestors. Wife, are our son-in-law and daughter gone before?

Wife. Yes, they have long been gone: the tent has been pitched for some time; the sheep killed; the cakes, as well as the dried hams and other meat offerings, prepared; and the wine heated. The shades of our ancestors and our relations wait the arrival of us two.—We must burn the incense paper, and then proceed to eat what remains of the offerings.

Lew. Wife, I fear that our children are not yet arrived.

Wife. I tell you that they are both gone before us.

Lew. But, have they arrived there yet?

Wife. They must have arrived there a long while ago.

Lew. Well, let us go on.—Do you see, that in the earnestness of our talk, we have already passed the tombs!—Those surely are the tombs of my ancestors?—Let us go thither.

Wife. Ah, we have indeed gone past them!

Lew. Now that we are arrived at the spot, you see that neither are the tents pitched, nor the sheep killed, nor the cakes prepared, nor the wine heated, nor the dried hams and other meat offerings

forthcoming.—What will happen to the shades of our ancestors and relations !

Wife. I am afraid that our children have been tardy in their journey.

Lew. At your time of life, wife, you should not have been telling me all these stories !

Wife. I have indeed been much mistaken.

Lew. Alas ! the sight of these tombs is enough to grieve one !—“ Do you see that on the graves and places of offering, from the walls of brick and earth, are springing up thorns and briars ?—Where are the Pě-yang and the Lǒ-yang trees ! ”—Wife, does it not seem that some one has just been at the tombs ?—“ The person who may

have visited them,—is it my daughter, or my nephew, my nearer or my more remote relation?—Look at those desolate graves! — The swampy ground receives not the savour of flesh nor fish, nor the fragrance of tea or of wine. There has not been thrown upon them so much as two shovel-fulls of fresh earth, nor burnt over them a single roll of paper, nor have they been sprinkled with so much as half a cup of warm wine!”—Wife, surely some one has been at those tombs and gone away again?

Wife. If any one has been here, he must have been some needy wretch.

Lew. “ He who has been here, and I myself, are equally miserable. It must

be owing to so much rain having fallen that so few have come to the tombs; and therefore the grass is so long.—When shall I look to the blessing of posterity! Each day will the herds of cattle be let loose upon our graves: where will be placed the stone tigers, and the goats of stone!”—Wife, since our children are not yet arrived, let us begin the performance of our adorations.

Wife. You say right.—Let us old people perform our adorations before the tombs until they come.

Lew. Wife! first perform the rites here.

Wife. Who are buried here?

Lew. They are the parents of my father.

Wife. Parents of my husband's father, bestow your favourable influence on our family ! Parents of my husband's father, soon may you ascend to the immortal mansions !

Lew. Now let our adorations be performed here.

Wife. Who are buried here ?

Lew. My own parents.

Wife. Parents of my husband, your lives being ended, after death be ye immortal !

Lew. Now, here.

Wife. Who are these ?

Lew. They are my younger brother and his wife ; the parents of Yin-sun.

Wife. Are these the graves of Yin-sun's father and mother !—Then you

advise me wrong. They are my inferiors; I am much above them; how then can I make the oblations at their tomb?

Lew. While they lived, it is true, they were our inferiors; but they are now dead!—Say then but this, “Your lives being ended, after death be ye immortal.” For my sake, wife, perform this supplication!

Wife. Well, I will obey you. [*aside.*] Ye two of the younger branch of Lew, listen to me in your graves! Remember that during your lives you relied on the partiality of your father and mother, and injured us two. You happened, however, to draw the shortest lot; and now you are dead, leaving behind you

that unfortunate Yin-sun, who is always haunting our doors. May he soon be crippled, or killed in the road, run over or trampled to death, and thus gratify my eyes!

Lew. When will you have done praying over the graves?

Wife. Eh, when did I open my mouth?

Lew. Wife, where shall we two be buried an hundred years * hence?

Wife. I have chosen a spot upon the brow of yonder hill. Do you observe the tall trees like so many umbrellas?

* The Chinese think it unlucky to mention death in direct terms; as the Romans said of any one deceased, *fuit*, or *vixit*, instead of *moritur*.

—It is there that we shall be buried an hundred years hence.

Lew. I am afraid that it will not be possible for us to be interred there!

Wife. Why will it not be possible? —where then shall we be buried?

Lew. I repeat it, wife, it will not be possible:—but we shall be buried in yonder spot.

Wife. That is a low, wet, desolate place: I will never consent to be buried there; but yonder.

Lew. “We, like a pair of decayed pillars, have no sons nor grandsons to support us. An hundred years hence, when our bodies are deeply buried, though our tombs may be turned to the right aspect, we shall still be interred

in that desolate spot.” On the 1st and 15th of the month, at the time of oblation, “who will, weepingly, deck our tombs with gilded paper, or burn incense to our memory?”—Wife, the reason why we never can be buried in yonder spot, is merely because we have not a son.

Wife. How, not a son; have we not our son-in-law and daughter?

Lew. Ah, I had forgotten them!—Come, as our children are not yet arrived, let us chat a little together;—and now let me ask you, wife, what is my surname?

Wife. Alas! the old man becomes more foolish as he grows older; he has forgotten his own surname!—Your

surname is Lew, and you are called Lew Yuen-wae.*

Lew. My surname is Lew, and I am called Lew Yuen-wae : — good — and what is your surname ?

Wife. My surname is Le.

Lew. Mine is Lew ; your's is Le : — but how came you to be one of my family ?

Wife. Do you really not know ! — For what purpose were all the go-betweens and the witnesses, and the feasts, and the marriage presents, but to make me your lawful wife, and one of your own family ?

Lew. Do people, when they meet

* Yuen-wae, a term somewhat equivalent to squire.

you, call you Madam Lew, or Madam Le?

Wife. How stupid this old man is grown!—"If I wed a fowl, I must fly after it; if I wed a dog, I must run after it: if I wed a deserted clod, I must sit down and guard it."*—

While you and I live, we have the same bed; when we are dead, we shall have the same grave.—I belong altogether to your family; how then should any one call me Madam Le?

Lew. It seems, then, that you are one of my family;—and what is our daughter's surname?

Wife. Her surname is also Lew; she is Lew Yin-chang.

* A proverb.

Lew. What is our son-in-law's surname?

Wife. His surname is Chang:—he is Chang-lang.

Lew. Now, let me ask you, wife;—will our daughter, an hundred years hence, be laid in the tombs of Lew, or in those of Chang?

Wife. She will be laid in those of Chang.—[*as if grieved.*]—Alas! husband, why do you think about that?—true it is, without a son, we are indeed without a support!

Lew. You comprehend it, then, at last, wife.

Wife. How fortunate would it be if some one of our own family would come to the tombs.

Enter YIN-SUN.

Yin. Having warmed and drank the wine, I am come back for the iron hoe.

Wife. Ah Yin-sun! whence come you, child?—why have you not lately been to eat at our house?—Your uncle too is here.

Yin. Your nephew came to pay adoration at the tombs of his family. I hope you mean not to chastise me for it.

Wife. I do not wish to chastise you, child!—I will acquaint your uncle of your coming.—[*going up to Lew-tsung-sheu.*]
—Husband, a younger branch of Lew is arrived.

Lew. What younger branch of Lew?

Wife. Our nephew Yin-sun.

Lew. Then you had better have named him Yin-sun ;—why style him a younger branch of Lew ?

Wife. Because our children are too old, to be called by the names of their childhood.*

Lew. Desire him to come forward, that I may question him.—Yin-sun, for what purpose came you hither ?

Yin. Your nephew came to pay adorations at the tombs of his family.

Lew. Wife, do you hear Yin-sun say, that he came to pay adorations at the tombs of the family ?

* After a certain age, they cease to use the *Heo-ming* or *Seaou-ming*, the epithets applied in early youth.

Wife. Yes, husband; he came to perform the rites at the tombs.

Lew. Yin-sun, who burnt this paper?

Yin. It was your nephew who burnt the paper.

Lew. Wife, Yin-sun says it was he who burnt the paper.

Wife. Yes; our nephew burnt the paper.

Lew. Who threw on the earth?

Yin. Your nephew threw on the earth.

Lew. Yin-sun says, wife, that he threw on the earth.

Wife. I hear that also, husband.

Lew. You came to pay adoration at the tombs, *you* burnt the paper, *you* threw up the earth:—but if you had

not come, there is some one else of the family who would.—I must chastise this poor wretch !

Wife. [*dissuading him.*] Husband, why will you chastise our nephew ?

Lew. Wife, let me alone !—“ The children of my brothers will all be buried in these tombs, and leave a posterity to make oblations to their ancestors.”—Yin-sun, “ look upon my wife and me as equal to your father and mother.”

Wife. Husband, do not chastise him.

Lew. “ Ah, you worthless woman, arrest not the staff, which is lifted for his correction.” It is for this reason, that I punish him, “ because in performing the rites to his ancestors, he

did not do it with liberality, but came to offer at their tombs in this shameful manner."

Wife. Husband, when you have spoken to him, then punish him.

Lew. I will punish him first, and then speak to him.

Wife. Speak to him first, and then punish him.

Lew. Let me alone, wife! "It is for these reasons that I would chastise him first, and then parley with him."—Yin-sun, was it you, who has been at the tombs?

Yin. It was your nephew who came to the tombs.

Lew. Why then did not you pitch a lofty tent, and kill the sheep, and

prepare the cakes and the hot wine, as well as the dried hams and other meat offerings.—What will become of the shades of our ancestors and our relations?

Wife. This old man is quite amusing.—Your nephew is without money, and destitute of both food and clothing.—Where then was he to find all this?

Lew. You say he has no money.—Yin-sun, observe.

Yin. What is it you wish your nephew to observe?

Lew. Why did not you go to those lofty edifices, and those tombs adorned with stone figures of goats and tigers, instead of coming hither?

Wife. You are wrong, husband.—

Those belong to the families of Chang and Le. He is the immediate descendant of our family of Lew ; why then should he not come to our tombs ?

Lew. Who is the immediate descendant of our family of Lew ?

Wife. Yin-sun.

Lew. I do not know that Yin-sun is the immediate descendant of our family ; —I say that our daughter and son-in-law are.

Wife. The more I concede to you, you become the more unreasonable. Among mankind, where is there to be found one faultless ? —I have hitherto been very obstinate. Nephew, I remember that I have both chastised and upbraided you : but from this day

hence do you live in our family. I will supply all your wants. Cease then to remember my former harshness.

Yin. Uncle, my aunt says, that from this time hence she will neither chastise nor upbraid me ; but that I must become one of the family, and that she will supply all my wants.

Lew. Who says so ?

Yin. My aunt says so.

Lew. Your aunt says so !—Oh Heaven, it must be a dream !—“ This happy event has come from the skies ; a foolish woman has returned to her senses.”

Yin. I have to thank you, uncle.

Lew. Don't pay your respects to me ;
“ but to your reformed aunt yonder.”
—[*Wife and Yin-sun seem affected.*]—

“Behold those two weeping; their tears flowing from the emotion of their hearts. Yesterday you suffered from her anger; from this time hence you need not to toil for your living.”—Wife, whose tombs are these?

Wife. They are the tombs of my family.

Lew. “Then they belong to the family of Lew.—How shall I intrust the property of my house to one of the house of Chang?”

Enter CHANG-LANG, Daughter, and Village Officer.

V. Off. We are all quite ready!

Lew. What family are going to their tombs with such a crowd?

V. Off. It is the family of Lew-chang Yuen-wae, going up to the tombs of their ancestors.

Lew. What Lew-chang Yuen-wae?

V. Off. Don't you know, old sir, that the son of Chang married the daughter of Lew? — Therefore I call him Lew-chang Yuen-wae.

Lew. I will go and speak to my wife.—Wife, our son-in-law is at length arrived: let us go and eat of the provisions.

Wife. Where have you been, you worthless couple, that you should come so late?

Lew. “ Ah, you careful mother, forbear to beat your dutiful children!” *

* In the original; “ Ah you neighbourhood-

Wife, be quiet: how does this matter concern our son-in-law?—"Question your dutiful daughter yonder." *

Wife. [*to Daughter.*] Child, why did I upbraid you just now? It was because your father was vexed with

"choosing mother of Meng-tsze, (Mencius,) cease to beat the wood-carving Ting-lan."—An allusion to two old stories. The mother of the philosopher Mencius, (as the Chinese name is Latinised by the Jesuits) finding that she had chosen a neighbourhood in which her son did not learn, tore the web, which she was forming, through vexation.—Ting-lan was a young woman who, when her parents died, carved their images in wood, and worshipped them.

* Literally, "Question the tiger-bestridding Yang-heang." Allusion to another old story, concerning a person who, when his father or mother was attacked by a wild beast, leaped on the said beast's back, to divert its attention.

you.—Why have not you put on better garments?

Daugh. These are surely good enough, mother.

Wife. Give me the keys; the next time you must provide better clothes for the occasion.

Chang. Wife, will you be deceived!

Daugh. I am not afraid: I know my mother is favourable towards me.—There are the keys.

Wife. Worthless couple, do you never come near my doors again!—Husband, I have got the keys.

Lew. “Son-in-law, depart from my house; daughter, return to your husband’s dwelling.—May you do well together, and Leang-hoey again find

his Meng-kuang.* — Go now and carry on your schemes somewhere else ; but forbear to come to my doors.—I no longer require you for a support, Chang-lang.

Wife. Husband, here are the keys ; do you take charge of the family as before.—I am old.

Lew. You say that you are old ; but I also am not young.—Wife, do you take our family affairs in hand.

Wife. What, am I still eighteen ? — The care of the family belongs to you.

Lew. No ; it belongs to you.

Wife. While we are contending about it, there stands one before us, who may take the charge upon him.—

* A fond couple of antiquity.

Husband, I will give the keys to our child Yin-sun.—What is your opinion?

Lew. It will be a little too soon.

Wife. I think that it is full time.

Lew. You are in the right, wife.

Wife. Yin-sun, come here.—I deliver all the keys to you; go and take charge of the family.

Yin. Thanks to you, my aunt.—Chang-lang, away!—I cannot endure this smell of poverty!

Chang. So, you have not forgotten a single word, I find!

Lew. Son-in-law, hope for no more of my money.—Daughter, consider that I allowed all my property to remain in your hands.—You should have performed your duty to your parents, and

have taken care to perform the rites at the tombs. All then would have been well."—[*to Chang-lang.*]—"Is it you, wretch, who are to be attended by crowds, while I am alone and forsaken!—Your conduct is short-sighted; I can see a little farther.—The fortunes of Lew are intrusted to one of the family.—Daughter, you need not again seek your father and mother."

Wife. Having delivered all our family concerns to Yin-sun, let us depart.

Lew. I will accompany you.—[*to Yin-sun.*]—"Forbear to quarrel and contend with them. The ancients say, a daughter is born to be of another family. When they come to our house,

forbear to argue with them :—desire
 them only to think of the season for
 paying adoration at the tombs of the
 family.”

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

Enter LEW-TSUNG-SHEU, Wife, and
YIN-SUN.

Lew. This day is my birthday, and we must at the same time rejoice with the young Yuen-wae on his becoming one of the family.—Yin-sun, who could have expected the event that has befallen you! “ You may welcome my birthday with the wine of long life; but the excess of my remorse is not to be expressed by words!—For the sake of a little wealth, I have encountered all hazards, and experienced every kind

of hardship and grief:—for this I have been hated and abused all my life!”

Enter [without] CHANG-LANG, and Daughter.

Chang. This is our father's birthday, and we come to pay our respects to him. We have arrived at the door.—
[to Yin-sun.]—Cousin!

Yin. Whence this smell of poverty?—Where do you come from?

Chang. I do not reproach you with poverty now!—We come to wait upon our father.

Yin. I will announce your arrival.
[going in.]—Sir, my two cousins are arrived.

Lew. Who are arrived?

Yin. My cousins.

Lew. “ You say that my daughter and her husband are at the door.—Why do I not permit them to enter?—Do you only ask them whose money they received, and at whose tombs they sacrificed.—If they enter our doors to-day, it will be plain that we cannot keep our word.

Yin. My uncle and aunt, be above feeling any resentment towards them.

Lew. “ The wretch’s words could never be depended on ; and every thing he did excited men’s anger.”—Yin-sun ! —“ I will call Yin-sun to approach and receive my directions.—If you allow those two to enter my doors, you will vex me, and I must punish you.”

Wife. Husband, those two children possess some share of duty:—indulge them a little.

Lew. You say, that they are virtuous and dutiful. Then I am a silly old fellow, and angry without reason. “Who taught them to pay such regard to each other as to forget the favours they had received from me?”—Yin-sun, go and say to them that their business has no concern with mine.—“If they cannot be received into their own family, it is all their own doing.”—Yin-sun, go and say, that if there be any one as nearly related as yourself, he is desired to enter.

Yin. [*to those without.*] My uncle says, that if there be any one as nearly

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related as myself, he desires him to enter.

Daugh. [*calls.*] Seaou-mei, go with your child to see my father.

Enter Seaou-mei and Boy.

Seaou. Yin-chang has desired me to bring in the boy to see his father.— [*seeing Lew-tsung-sheu.*] Sir, Seaou-mei has come with your child!

Lew. Is not this Seaou-mei!—From whence come you?

Seaou. Have you, in three years, forgotten an acquaintance of many?

Lew. “Do you ask if in three years I have forgotten an acquaintance of many?”—Seaou-mei! you were most closely attached to me;—how could

you run away with another, you worthless creature!—"Know you that, 'man and wife for a day, and an union for life?'"

Seaou. Sir, I have brought you your son.

Lew. Who is my son?

Seaou. Is not this he?

Lew. Yes, surely he is my son!—"Let us this day cease to question who is right and who is wrong.—Wife, we have now found one who will mourn for us!"—Child, call me father!—[*the Boy calls him "Father."*]"—Ah, that sound has transported me!—How could he harbour such jealousy, and in his contrivances to get a little money, endeavour to cut off my posterity from

the root!"—Yin-sun, tell my daughter and her husband to come here. — Daughter, where has Seaou-mei been these last three years.

Daugh. Father, if you do not know, listen to me while I tell you the whole history. — When Seaou-mei had been pregnant six months, Chang-lang was seized with a fit of jealousy, and wished to make away with her. — Your daughter, reflecting that you were old, and that if any thing happened to Seaou-mei, your posterity would be cut off, concealed her in a place of safety, and brought up the child. For three years, whatever they required, both as to food and clothing, was secretly provided by your daughter.

—Repenting of your former kindness, you took away all your effects from my charge.— But, from this day, let your resentment cease against your daughter.— Though you have a dutiful nephew, how can he be compared to your own child?

Lew. How was I to know all this, child, without your telling me! — “ Since it proves thus, you have acted as my daughter; but my former displeasure was not without its excuse.— My son-in-law yonder is of another house; but my daughter is worthy to be recognised by her family.”

Wife. Who could have thought that Lew Yuen-wae would still have a son!

Lew. “ We need not apprehend

being buried in that desolate spot ; for our family has now a representative. Your sorrow has met with its cure.”

Daugh. Father, though you have this day found a son, do not cease to remember your daughter !”

Lew. “ Daughter, how can I be sensible of a benefit and not requite it ? ”

Yin. Since you have found a son, I return all the keys to you, uncle.—I have thus been rich for only one day !

Lew. My daughter, my nephew, and my son—“ I take the whole of my property, and divide it among you.”—Do you all listen to my words. For sixty years I had been heaping up wealth ; but as I had not a son, my

sorrow was without an end. — My brother unhappily died early, and Yin-sun, my nephew, was long banished from the family.—That villain Chang-lang falsely plotted to get possession of my wealth ; but my dutiful daughter secretly preserved my son.—When we went to the tombs, at the usual season, to perform the rites, the feelings of affection returned, and jealousy became changed to love.—Thus by pointing out the desolate spot, I taught a bitter lesson to my old wife ;—nor did I give away a part of my wealth in vain, for, by the favour of Heaven, I have an heir in my old age !

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NOTE 1, p. 1.—Scribe—"The old man's
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name, it is probable that the translator has
supplied it, "NOTES." one of the ge-
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Mandarin's Duke of Miao, there being in
the author's name no indication of name,
but what was furnished by a friend, with
which he was personally acquainted.

NOTE 2, p. 3.—Scribe—"The author's
house with him." To ascertain the names
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NOTE 2, p. 3.—“*Bringing his mother's bones with him.*”] To abandon the graves of his family, is one of the greatest crimes against morality of which a Chinese can be guilty. A stranger in China is astonished to see the number of coffins lying near the banks of rivers and canals, ready to be trans-

ported to some favourite burying place, or to be conveyed, with the rest of the moveables, to some new residence of the family. The old man notices this to prepossess the audience in favour of his nephew's regard for filial piety.

NOTE 3, p. 4.—“ *What do you want with asses ?*”] The Chinese of the middling and lower orders rarely make use of any other beast of burden than the ass, on the principle that it will go through more labour, and requires less food, than any other of equal size and value. Horses are used only by the officers of government, by the military, and persons of great wealth; the carriage of heavy goods, and the conveyance of travellers, being generally by the numerous rivers and canals which intersect the country in all directions. Neither are oxen kept for labour or food, or cows for milk; the produce of the land being consumed generally by man.

NOTE 4, p. 8.—“ *Shakes the rest from his sleeve.*”] The Chinese wear no pockets,

but make use of their wide sleeves when turned up, and also of their boot tops, as pockets. *Chang-lang*, the only vicious character in the play, is here introduced, in the opening, to the audience, as a thief and a liar.

NOTE 5, p. 10.—“*But Seaou-mei is now pregnant.*”] We are not sure that any of the oriental nations, among whom the practice of polygamy is common, excepting the Chinese, have founded the necessity and justification of it on moral and political principles.

NOTE 6, p. 16.—“*You may then hire out her services, or sell her, as it best pleases you.*”] The state of slavery is very common in China ; parents sell their children ; children may sell themselves ; and husbands may dispose of their second wives or concubines ; but this is all done by private contract, and with the supposed consent of the parties. The condition of slaves is, however, very different from that of negroes ; from the

moment they become one of the family, they are considered, and in most respects treated, as a member of the family; but they are not equal in the sight of the law; for a crime committed by a slave is punishable one degree heavier; and a crime committed against a slave, one degree lighter, than in the case of free citizens.

NOTE 7, p. 22.—“*Bring a carriage there.*”] The best of Chinese *carriages*, is a small covered cart, with two wheels, and without springs, drawn by one horse. The *carriage* in question was probably a sort of litter, carried between two asses, the usual mode in which country women are conveyed, as the old lady, in a former scene, talked of her asses for her own riding.

NOTE 8, p. 34.—“*When I am dead, inter my body on the brow of some unfrequented hill.*”] The Chinese are as anxious about the place of their sepulture, as they are about their coffins. The priests and sooth-sayers are consulted as to the most propitious spot

of interment, which, when convenient, is generally selected on the side of some verdant mountain; and this open and airy situation is anxiously sought after for depositing the bodies of men after death, who, when living, cooped themselves up in close and unwholesome alleys of some large city.

NOTE 9, p. 35.—“*And plant the Fir and the Cypress thickly around.*”] The *Thuja orientalis*, or the *Arbor Vitæ*, and the *Cupressus pendula*, a tree very much resembling the weeping willow, are those most commonly planted on burying grounds.

NOTE 10, p. 39.—“*Comrade, they are about to distribute money at Kae-yuen temple.*”] Mendicity is by no means common in China; the disgrace of asking alms not only attaches to the beggar, but to his whole family; and the most plausible excuse for asking alms, in the eyes of a Chinese, would be one of the worst in other countries,—the misery of having no children. The temples of the sectaries of *Fo* and *Lao-koon*, are the

usual resort of beggars, impostors, and gamblers; and instead of being “houses of prayer,” are literally “dens of thieves.”

NOTE 11. p. 46.—“*If that wretch should see our money he will want it all.*”] The only currency of China is easily seen; it consists of pieces of base copper, one *leang*, or ounce of silver, commonly called by Europeans a *tael*, and valued at six shillings and eight-pence, being equivalent to one thousand of these pieces; they have a square hole in the centre, and are usually strung upon a cord of twisted bamboo.

NOTE 12, p. 55.—“*Buy metallic paper to burn.*”] Besides meats and fruits which the parties visiting the tombs feast upon themselves, a libation of wine, an offering of cake, and burning paper, covered over with a kind of varnish, which makes it appear as if gilt, or tin-foil, are indispensibly necessary for the ceremonial rites to the manes of their ancestors.

NOTE 13, p. 57.—“*The commencement*

of *Tsing-ming*."] *Tsing-ming*, one of the *Tsie-ke*, or 24 divisions of the Chinese year, each consisting of 15 days; and distinguished by a particular name. Two of these are equivalent to one of the signs of our zodiac. The *Tsing-ming* commences 105 days after the winter solstice, or about the time when the sun enters the 16th degree of Aries, i. e. the 5th of April. The Hindus have the same division of the year into 360 days (*saura* days), distinguished from the *savana* days, of which there are $365\frac{1}{4}$ in the year.— May not this be the year of 360 days, in use among the ancient Egyptians, to which afterwards was added 5 days, to make it correspond with the *savana* year? T.

NOTE 14, p. 64.—“ *This wine is cold, and not fit to drink.*”] The Chinese drink all their liquors heated; frequently even *seau-schoo*, or ardent spirits. In the northern provinces, however, they cool their melons and other fruits on masses of ice.

NOTE 15, p. 69.—“ *The stone tigers and*

the goats of stone."] Almost the only architectural variety displayed by the Chinese is to be found in their tombs. These mansions of the dead assume every possible variety of shape, and are very commonly decorated with ill carved representations of lions, tigers, elephants, horses, &c.

" Quæ gratia currûm

Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes

Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos."

The Tartars sacrifice living animals; and since the accession of the present dynasty, slaves and concubines were offered to the manes of some of the imperial family; but the Chinese were so shocked by the practice, that the present dynasty found it expedient to abolish it by law.

NOTE 16, p. 73.—"*Our tombs may be turned to the right aspect.*"] No Chinese will build a house, or a family tomb, until he has consulted some priest or other respecting the *fung-swee* (wind and water);

that is to say, the precise line in which the several parts are to be placed.

NOTE 16, p. 75.—“ *The go-betweens and the witnesses.*”] Without these, and the marriage presents, and certain feasts, no marriage is accounted legal ; but the second wife may be taken without any ceremony.

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Cleveland-row, St. James's.



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